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SUBJECT: KABILA TO WED ON JUNE 4

REF: KINSHASA 620

1. (U) Cardinal Frederic Etsou, the Archbishop of Kinshasa, announced during his May 14 sermon that President Joseph Kabila will marry his long-time partner, Marie-Olive Lembe, on June 4 (which will also mark Kabila's 35th birthday). Etsou said the ceremony will take place in the Sanctuary of Notre Dame, located in the Kinshasa neighborhood of Limete. Kabila and Lembe have one child, a five-year-old girl, with Lembe, but neither appear publicly with the President. Speculation regarding Kabila's marital plans had been circulating in Kinshasa for months, and Kabila, in an interview in the April edition of "Jeune Afrique Intelligent" (reftel), said there were "certain obligations" he would need to address in the months ahead.

2. (SBU) Comment: The timing of the marriage should be regarded as a calculated political decision. Kabila's relationship with Lembe and his out-of-wedlock child are widely known and constituted potential political liabilities for his presidential campaign. The marriage, on the day of his 35th birthday (also an important milestone) and just eight weeks before elections, will undoubtedly have the effect of making Kabila appear more presidential. End comment.
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